

Residents Question BP, Coast Guard About Response Efforts

May 22, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) held a town hall today in Houma to listen to constituent concerns about the oil leak disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and provide information about the response efforts.

Congressman Melancon invited representatives from the Coast Guard, BP, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Small Business Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and officials from Terrebonne, Lafourche and St. Mary Parishes to take part in the town hall to help answer questions and listen to concerns.

“South Louisianians are justifiably angry that the well is still leaking thousands of barrels of oil into the Gulf every day, and I share their frustration,” said Congressman Melancon. “I hosted this town hall today so that they could speak directly with BP and try to get some answers. BP must be held accountable for repairing the damage this disaster is causing to our coastal marshes, our economy, and our way of life in south Louisiana.”

“I want to thank everyone who took the time today to attend this town hall and share their ideas and concerns. As your representative, I will keep fighting to make sure your voice is heard by decision makers on the ground here in Louisiana and also back in Washington.”

At Congressman Melancon’s request, the following speakers attended the town hall:

- **BP:** Mr. Darryl Willis, senior Community Liaison
- **U.S Coast Guard:** Captain Edwin Stanton, Federal Coordinating Officer for the Houma Incident Command Post and Captain of the Port of New Orleans
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:** Ms. Nicolle Rutherford, NOAA Fisheries expert and Mr. Jordan Stout, NOAA pollution/chemical expert
- **Environmental Protection Agency:** Sam Coleman, Region 6 Superfund Director
- **Small Business Administration:** Roger Busch

Congressman Melancon also invited Terrebonne Parish President Michel Claudet, Lafourche Parish President Charlotte Randolph, and St. Mary Parish President Paul Naquin.

Following his town hall, Congressman Melancon will tour the coast along Terrebonne, Lafourche, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parishes by helicopter with U.S. Coast Guard Captain Edwin Stanton and a representative from BP. They will survey the impact of the oil leak from the Deepwater Horizon disaster on the coastline west of the Mississippi River.

Congressman Melancon represents the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana's Third Congressional District.

Congressman Melancon has been leading efforts in Louisiana to coordinate the response to the oil leak caused by the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform one month ago. Earlier this week, he [sent a letter](#) to the Administration requesting temporary health care clinics to serve volunteers and workers in south Louisiana who have been impacted by the oil leak. The clinics would provide medical checkups to people who have come in contact with the oil and assist in monitoring the health effects of the oil leak on south Louisianians.

Last weekend, Congressman Melancon visited the Houma Incident Command Post in Terrebonne Parish and met with U.S. Coast Guard Captain Edwin Stanton, the Federal Coordinating Officer for the disaster. He has also met with Terrebonne and Lafourche Parish officials and been briefed on their plans for boom deployment and other protective measures to prevent the oil sheen from damaging their coastal marshes.

Recently, Congressman Melancon [traveled with a bipartisan delegation](#) of Energy and Commerce Committee members visiting south Louisiana to investigate the oil leak and evaluate the response and containment efforts.

Congressman Melancon has also held a town hall in Chalmette to listen to constituent concerns about the oil leak disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and provide information about the response efforts. Representatives from the Coast Guard, BP, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Louisiana State University, Louisiana's seafood industry, and St. Bernard Parish officials took part in the town hall to help answer questions and listen to concerns.

Congressman Melancon has been working closely with parish and federal officials to monitor response efforts and provide assistance where needed. He [toured by boat](#) the coastal marshes in St. Bernard Parish with parish officials and viewed the efforts of local fishermen to deploy boom. Over one million feet of protective boom have been deployed to protect Louisiana's fragile coastal marshes from the oil slick.

In his conversations with local fishermen and parish officials involved in laying the boom, Congressman Melancon learned they face a severe shortage in boom material, hindering their ability to protect the coast. In response, Congressman Melancon sent a letter to President Barack Obama [requesting military aircraft](#) be used to help bring protective boom to the Gulf Coast more quickly. The President granted his request and last week the first Air Force aircraft arrived in Belle Chasse with additional boom.

Congressman Melancon has also been working to minimize the economic impact of the oil leak on Louisiana's seafood industry. On April 29th, the Congressman [contacted](#) the Secretary of Commerce and the head of NOAA's Fisheries Service urging them to prepare to direct disaster funding to Louisiana's commercial and recreational fishermen.

[In his letter](#)

, Congressman Melancon noted that the oil intrusion resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster would likely damage the fragile habitats on which Louisiana's fishermen, oystermen, and shrimpers depend.

###